

Idaho Wolf Management Progress Report November 21 - December 4, 2008

Delisting: FWS – Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Status (WY, MT, ID):

For the time being, all wolves to the north of Interstate- 90 in Idaho remain listed as endangered. All wolves in the southern half of Montana, all of Idaho south of Interstate- 90, and all of Wyoming are being managed under the 2005 and 2008 Endangered Species Act nonessential experimental population 10j regulations. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is acting as the designated agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in implementing day-to-day management of wolves under an MOU between the Department of Interior and Idaho signed January 2006.

Delisting wolves and assuring their proper long-term management is and has been of highest priority for the state of Idaho and the Fish and Game Department. We continue to work along with the Department of Interior, Department of Justice, and other states and interveners toward the eventual delisting of wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains, and move toward state management under the state Wolf Conservation and Management Plan and the Wolf Population Management Plan.

New on delisting - The Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing comments provided on the delisting rule received prior to the November 28 deadline. They will rewrite the rule based on comments and will resubmit a final delisting rule. The Fish and Wildlife Service is trying to prepare the rule before to the end of 2008. Idaho's comments to Fish and Wildlife on the delisting rule are at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

You may review past wolf weekly publications on our wolf webpage and links along with all pertinent and updated wolf information and publications at:
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

Monitoring

Aerial telemetry flights are ongoing. November and December are the primary months Idaho Fish and Game and the Nez Perce Tribe attempt to count wolf pack members from the air. Snow conditions and time of year when pack members tend to congregate allow us to get quality pack sizes from the air.

Additionally, Fish and Game and the Nez Perce Tribe are conducting high elevation flights to attempt to locate "missing" wolves, wolves with radio collars that may have dispersed from known territories or between states. At any one time, 10 percent to 20 percent of a wolf population may be dispersing, accounting for many of the lone or paired wolf reports. These dispersals may be either temporary or permanent. Wolves may be conducting short forays looking for a potential mate or exploring outside the boundaries of their natal territory, or may be establishing a permanent territory away from their natal pack. Usually when wolves reach breeding age at about 2-3 years, many become restless and begin dispersal. Dispersal movements tend to peak during breeding season (late January to late February) but may occur at any time of year. Dispersing wolves tend to have higher mortality than resident pack members.

Management

From January 1 – December 4 agencies have documented 144 dead wolves in Idaho. Of those, 87 were depredation control actions by USDA Wildlife Services, 14 legal kills, nine illegal kills, four natural kills, and 30 other or unknown.

Wildlife Services confirmed that wolves killed 16 cows, 86 calves, 215 sheep, 14 dogs, one foal; injured one cow, seven calves, six sheep, seven dogs; probably killed six cows, 22 calves, 57 sheep; and probable injured one cow, three calves, one sheep, two dogs.

Table 1. Confirmed wolf depredations and wolf mortality in Idaho from 2003 to Dec 4, 2008.

YEAR	Depredations ¹				Wolf Mortality			
	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	Total	WS ²	10j ³	Other	Total
2003	7	130	3	140	7	0	8	15
2004	19	176	4	199	17	0	21	38
2005	29	166	12	207	24	3	16	43
2006	41	237	4	282	35	7	19	61
2007	57	211	10	278	43	7	27	77
2008	102	215	14	331	87	14	43	144
Total	245	1133	47	1425	213	31	134	378

¹ Includes confirmed depredations resulting in death or injury

² Authorized take by Wildlife Services

³ Authorized take under 10j or while delisted for protection of stock and dogs

Control

From November 25 – December 4, Wildlife Services documented three confirmed depredations on livestock, one on a pet dog and another probable wolf depredation on guard dogs. WS confirmed that wolves killed one pregnant cow, one calf, three sheep and one dog and probably injured two guard dogs. All but one of the depredations occurred on private land. In response to those and previous depredations, WS shot and killed two wolves. During the same date range in 2007, WS had one confirmed depredation and it involved wolves vs. hounds.

Note: updates in table above included corrections since last report, however, some errors may still exist. Numbers will be updated in the end of year report.

Research

Nothing new to report.

Information and Education

Fish and Game and Wildlife Services met with biologists and “range cons” representing the Boise and Sawtooth national forests to update U.S. Forest Service on status of wolves on national forests and troubleshoot depredation issues on Forest Service grazing allotments. About 30 people attended (Fish and Game seven, Wildlife Services three and Forest Service 20).

The Fish and Game Commission met on November 6 and discussed timelines and management direction for the Idaho Fish and Game wolf program now and following the proposed delisting in mid January. A short video on these discussions can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hv24KW6mu7k>

Further information and updates, including the directives provided by the commission can be viewed at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

A reminder: wolves are protected under the endangered species act and killing one illegally is a federal offense.

Please help us manage wolves by reporting wolf sightings on our Fish and Game observation form found at: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report/